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## USAID Announces Two Development Innovation Ventures Awards Supporting Haiti

**Port-au-Prince, Haiti –** The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is pleased to announce two Development Innovation Ventures (DIV) awards in Haiti. USAID's DIV is an investment program that supports innovative and cost-effective solutions to pressing development challenges in Haiti and around the world.

The first award will support the University of Maryland (UMD) to test a technological solution to two critical needs in Haiti – the need for effective wastewater treatment to help curb the cholera epidemic, and the need for decentralized, low-cost energy sources. Access to clean water and availability of sanitation systems are limited in Haiti, and cholera is likely to persist until access to adequate water and sanitation improves. The University of Maryland pilot, supported by $99,987 in Stage 1 financing, aims to assess and create a sustainable sanitation model that will improve public health, the environment and local economy in Haiti.

The UMD project will generate biogas from low-cost anaerobic digesters that treat wastewater by turning the large energy content of human waste into biogas as a clean burning, renewable energy source, as well as an enriched fertilizer. Testing this method of waste treatment will contribute to a safer and more efficient way to reduce waterborne and other diseases, including cholera; additionally, production of value-added products through waste treatment could provide incentives for proper treatment of human excreta in a cash-limited economy.

USAID/Haiti granted another DIV award in April to Carbon Roots International, a U.S.-based nonprofit organization, for a project that provides an integrated approach to energy and environmental challenges. For the past two years, Carbon Roots International has been working and refining "char" technology, which converts biomass-like agricultural waste into both cooking fuel and an alternative to fertilizer.

Char, when compressed into "green charcoal" briquettes, burns cleaner and slightly longer than the wood charcoal traditionally used for fuel in Haiti, while also preventing the deforestation and environmental pollution associated with using wood. When used as biochar, char acts as a fertilizer-like soil remediation tool that increases water retention, improves cycling of nutrients in the soil, raises crop yields, and sequesters carbon. The DIV Stage 1 award of $100,000 to Carbon Roots International will be used to test the organization's deployment of the first green charcoal production center in northern Haiti. The project has the potential to not only addresses Haiti's energy challenges, but also to improve people's health and surrounding environment.

These two projects in Haiti join DIV's portfolio of over 60 projects in 24 countries around the world. Launched in October 2010, **USAID's Development Innovation Ventures (DIV)** holds a quarterly grant competition for innovative ideas, pilots and tests them using cutting-edge analytical methods, and scales those that demonstrate cost-effectiveness and widespread development impact. DIV uses a staged-funding model inspired by venture capital to invest comparatively small amounts in relatively unproven ideas, and continues to support only those that prove effective.

For more information on DIV and how to apply, go to **http://www.usaid.gov/div**